Old Age Pension Dental Assistance Program

Addressing Your Concerns

The Dental Care Act of 1977 initiated the Old Age Pension Dental Assistance Program to assist qualified low-income seniors in obtaining dental services including dentures and partials, denture repair, preventive and restorative services, and tooth extractions.

Legislation in 1979 incorporated allowable procedures and set up a provider reimbursement structure with increases set to the consumer price index until 2008. Since 2008, a Dental Advisory Committee (DAC) has set reimbursement fees and procedures to be approved by the Board of Health. Funding for this program was discontinued in July 2009.

The OAP Dental Program was reinstated on July 1, 2012. The Dental Advisory Committee was reconvened and new members were appointed by the governor. Rule changes are being proposed to the Board of Health to establish a current provider reimbursement schedule. As part of reinstatement and rule changes, the Oral Health Unit of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment solicited feedback from previous and potential providers. The Oral Health Unit drafted the following responses to address concerns communicated during this phase of the Board of Health hearing process:

Concern: Having the rates in the rules makes it difficult to make fee changes. Likewise, having rates in the statute is difficult as well.

Response: We recognize this as an issue. Procedures and fees are no longer in statute; they are now only in Board of Health (BOH) rules. Changes still require several steps. We expect the Dental Advisory Committee to propose changes to the reimbursement/fee schedule. In the meantime, the current rule does not propose any fee changes. Later this year, now that the DAC is operational, it will review reimbursements and consider fee changes.

Concern: The relationship between OAP and Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) is confusing. Will Adult Resource for Care and Help (ARCH) improve this situation? Can counties provide a list of OAP clients to AAAs to support public noticing?

Response: We will continue to work to strengthen collaboration and increase awareness of OAP to benefit eligible clients. We do not know ARCH's plans for coordination between AAAs and counties.

Concern: Is it possible to change the rules to include eligibility requirements rather than referring clients to the statutes?

Response: Statute referral is preferred to reflect statute changes. Otherwise, a statute change would trigger a rule change leading to both BOH Rule Change and Executive Order (EO) because of potential effects on local government. This process can take as long as six months.

Concern: The 2008 provider reimbursement rate does not reflect current medical and dental costs. Low reimbursement rates may provide a disincentive for dental providers to treat patients participating in OAP. What is the Department doing to update the reimbursement schedule?

Response: The process for proposing reimbursement changes and securing BOH approval required a fully-seated Dental Advisory Committee and two to three months of subsequent research and meetings. This would have delayed treatment to eligible seniors until approximately March 2013. Now that we have reinstated the DAC, that committee will determine and recommend reimbursement changes to the BOH. BOH changes will trigger the Executive Order process, which calls for public health agency feedback and future BOH deliberation and action. We anticipate a proposed provider reimbursement schedule change for the next fiscal year, July 1, 2013, to June 30, 2014. That process will need to begin in December of 2013 or January of 2014 to be completed for the next fiscal year.

Concern: What is the Department's timeline for updating the reimbursement information for the program?

Response: We expect to update reimbursement information after the Sept. 19 BOH meetings.

Thank you for your interest in the Old Age Pension Dental Assistance Program. Please feel free to contact <u>Jean McMains</u> with any questions or concerns.